

Big Bar Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

PALS 56140, 05/31/2019

Some areas along the 23N00 Road and 23N28 Road between Coyote Gap, Highway 70, and Big Bar Mountain, including Big Bar Mountain where the Forest Service lookout was consumed and the radio repeater destroyed in the Camp Fire (November 8-25, 2018) burned under high and mixed severity. Left unmitigated these dead, dying, and structurally damaged live trees will become hazardous fuels. We propose to remove fire killed trees that would become dangerous fuels, to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, wildfires.

The project includes mixed conifer species: ponderosa pine, white fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, Douglas-fir, tan-oak, and black-oak. It is proposed to salvage these trees in the fall of 2019 using mechanical tractor logging practices. If opportunities exist we will offer stands using cable logging practices as appropriate. Trees would be marked using the marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California.

Re-entry may occur up to 3 years to remove any additional danger trees for additional volume. Trees to be removed under this project will be designated with Blue Paint for cut tree mark in the low severity areas or Leave Tree mark of white paint will be used in high severity fire areas. Boundaries will be flagged with blue flagging and have painted orange. Pink and blue flags are designated to mark corners of units or where they intersect with roads. The boundary of the polygons on the attached map shows the location of proposed tree removal.

The proposal also includes reforestation and maintenance activities to include: site preparation which can include biomassing, hand-cutting, hand- or grapple-piling and pile burning; planting; grubbing after planting; and a variety of maintenance activities including mastication, hand-cut and hand- or grapple-pile, pile burning, prescribed fire, and targeted grazing. Maintenance could be needed for a period of 40 or more years. Planting could consist of conifer or hardwood species or some combination that is appropriate for future climatic conditions.

The fire burned portions of California spotted owl (CSO) protected activity centers (PAC). The 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) provides for boundaries of PAC to be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to better include known and suspected nest stands and encompass the best available 300 acres of habitat. Project work will include identifying replacement acres (one-for-one) that are better suited for habitat following SNFPA designation guidance. After the acres are replaced, the stand(s) will no longer be PAC and will be salvage logged.

During project layout we will look for areas (landings, road maintenance, areas of 100% tree mortality) with the potential for development of pullouts and roadside parking to facilitate dispersed recreation opportunities.

On February 7, 2019, FRRD timber staff and wildlife biologists spent the day with provincial entomologist Danny Cluck in another area burned in the Camp Fire. As a group they marked units using the marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California. Danny Cluck is a co-author of these marking guidelines and served as a subject matter expert on the marking guidelines and standardizing their interpretation across the interdisciplinary team.

On May 9, 2019, 10 representatives of local government, environmental organizations, industry, and the Forest Service visited the project area as part of a larger field trip of the FRRD Collaborative to tour National Forest System lands in the Camp Fire area. The project was introduced at the field trip site and later that evening at the quarterly meeting of the FRRD Collaborative. The FRRD interdisciplinary team (IDT) met May 29, 2019, along with collaborators to approve a project area and propose stand-by-stand prescriptions.

The project was entered into PALS and appeared on the Schedule Of Proposed Actions (SOPA) on May 31, 2019. Clay Davis, FRRD District Planner, briefed the Butte County Forest Advisory Committee on May 20, 2019, at their monthly meeting.

The project is anticipated to have a decision in August, 2019. Please provide any comments to Eric J. Murphy, ejmurphy@usda.gov or Clay R. Davis, clay.davis@usda.gov